reparing to Meet the Media

SMC Public Affairs

Overview

- **Why Work with the Media?**
- **The News Business**
- **Successfully Engaging the Media**
- **Successful Interviews**
- **What to do about Bad News**

Why Work With Media?

- **Responsibility to inform public**
- **Maintain/build support, trust**
- **If you don't, <u>somebody will</u>**

Your Challenges

- **Inform audience**
- **Educate reporter**
- **Take control of every interview**
  - **Understand the process**
  - **Use tools and techniques**

The News Business

or

(News is a Business!)

The Business of News

- **TV features 120 channels and counting**

- **Thus, media must exercise news judgment**
  - **Story must be interesting**
  - **Must have current “news peg”**
  - **Focus is on conflict, drama or change**
  - **Strong visuals a must for TV**
  - **Media seeks “balanced” points of view**

- Window of opportunity for you

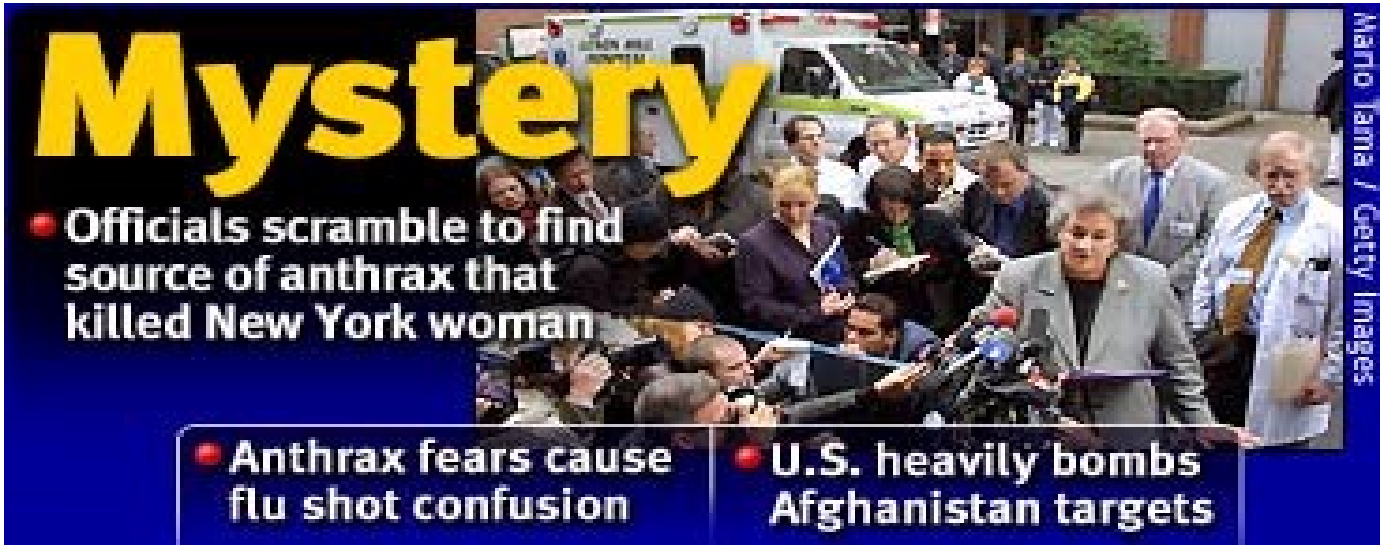
The Business of News

- **Television News**
  - **23-min. newscast; 11-min. “news ho**
  - **Average story (30 seconds-1:30)**
  - **Average sound bite (9-12 seconds)**
  - **Not much time to tell your story**

- **Print**
  - **Average story 23 column inches**
  - **Average quote - about 20 words**
  - **80-page newspaper; 50-65% ads**
  - **More in-depth coverage**

Take Control

- **Understand “news”**
- **Mission plan the media opportunity**
- **Develop strong interview messages**


Mystery
Officials scramble to find source of anthrax that killed New York woman
Anthrax fears cause flu shot confusion
U.S. heavily bombs Afghanistan targets
Mario Tama / Getty Images

Mission Plan the Media Opportunity

- What's the format?
  - Live or taped
  - Print or broadcast
- Who's the audience?
  - Internal or external
  - Local, regional, national, international
  - Is audience familiar with the topic
  - Existing audience perceptions/misperceptions

Mission Plan the Media Opportunity

- What's the story line?
  - What prompted the story?
    - Related to larger national/international issue?
  - What is the general line of questions?
  - What has already been said? By whom?
  - Who else has interviewer talked with?

(Your PA staff will help gather this information)

Mission Plan the Media Opportunity

- **Location**
  - **Choose one that fits your message/subject area**
  - **More important for TV**

  - **Strong visual background**
  - **Avoid distracting sounds**

Mission Plan the Media Opportunity

- The interviewer
  - Reporter's track record?
  - Past coverage in that outlet?

(PA will find this out for you)

Clear Messages

- **Success depends on your "messages"**
  - **Analogous to TV commercia**
  - **Key points**
    - **Simple, memorable, relevant statements**
    - **Have positive spin, but de twist message**
    - **Vivid imagery grabs atter**

"We will target the political, diplomatic, economic, and financial interests of terrorists and those who harbor them."

"The Air Force doesn't tolerate drug use, sexual harassment or discrimination of any kind."

"Everyone in the Air Force is accountable for their actions."

"When we blend space acquisition and operations functions, the same people who acquire the satellites may be flying the satellites."

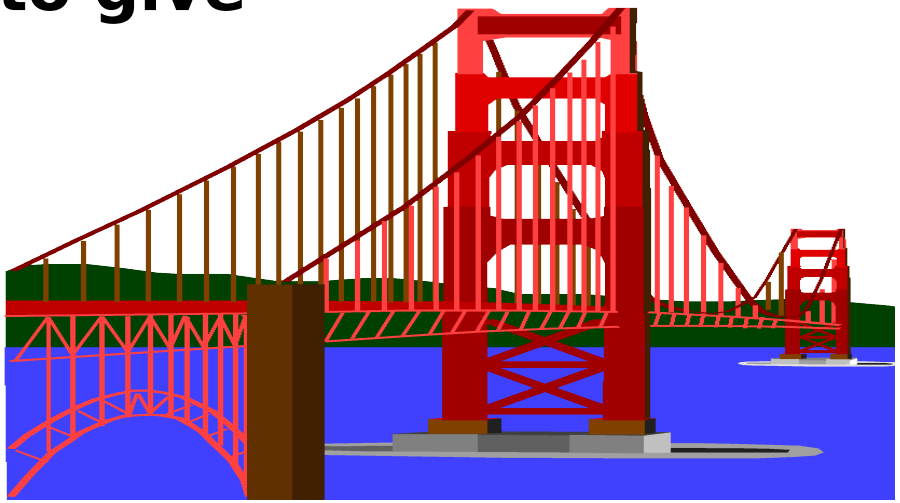
"I've pulled more than 100 missile alerts, and in my experience, not many military bases are more prepared."

You're in Control

- **Build your messages in advance**
  - **Know the points you want to make**
  - **Develop messages into "sound bites"**
  - **Practice your delivery**
- **Hammer messages hom**
- **Answer question, but use "tools"**

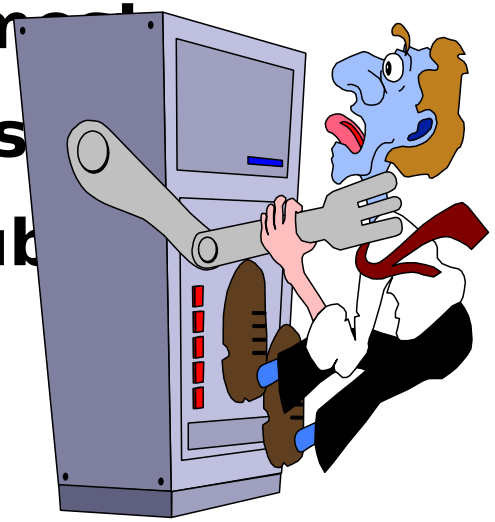
Interview Tools - Bridging

- "Bridge" to key messages
  - Don't wait for right question to be asked - answer question, then bridge to message
  - Move beyond the question asked to the answer you want to give



Interview Tools - Hooking

- "Hook" audience/interviewer
  - Put your message right up front
  - Focus on what's important
  - Force interviewer to follow your lead
    - "You haven't asked me the m
      important question, which is
    - "Let me elaborate on this sub



Interview Tools - Flagging

- "Flag" what people should remember
- Social science tells us …
  - Audience retains 7% of what we <u>say</u>
  - Body language is important! People react to voice intonation, non-verbals and foot stomping
    - Pauses, gestures, eye contact, "leaning in"
    - "What's most important …"
    - "What you need to remember is…"

Interview Tools - Credibility

- **Use your personal authority and experience**
  - **Establish professional credentials, title**
  - **You know military better than the reporter**
  - **You've been there. Te your personal stories**
  - **Critics aren't shy,**

    so you can't be!

Techniques to Remember

- You are always “on-the-record”
  - Don’t give “personal” opinion
  - If you don’t know, say so -- never speculate
  - Unless it’s live, it’s not a conversation
    - Wait until you’re ready to answer
    - The question won’t appear in article or TV
    - If you need to start over, do it
- Background and “off-the-record”
  - Background: quotes but no attribution
  - Off-the-record: only with “most trusted” reporters

Handling Bad News

- Do the right thing for the right reasons
- Admit mistake immediately, fix the problem
- Tell the truth quickly, don't ignore the medi
- Tell y o next

How to Make Bad News Worse

- Lie
- Don’t know the facts
- Frequently change your story
- No/Multiple spokesmen
- Don’t know/rehearse your messages
- Take media on over trivial mistakes

Executing

- **DO**
  - **Take every opportunity to tell the AF story**
  - **Find out all you can about the interview**
  - **Establish ground rules**
  - **Determine your audience**
  - **Practice answering the question**
  - **Relax, convey enthusiasm**

Executing

- **DO NOT**
  - **Fail to prepare**
  - **Cover up or gloss over the truth**
  - **Speculate**
  - **Use acronyms**
  - **Answer hypothetical questions**
  - **Say anything you don’t want to see on television or read in the newspaper**

Summary

- **Prepare and practice**
- **Use your messages**
- **Don’t shy away from the media, tell the Air Force story**

The Miami Herald

abc

npr

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